

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
January 5, 2011 beginning at 9:00 a.m.
Camp Dodge, Freedom Center, Room C23
7105 – NW 70th Avenue
Johnston, IA 50313-1824

Present: Darlene McMartin, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Don Delamore, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Becky Dirks Haugsted, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Todd Jacobus, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Francis McAllister, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Steve Mulcahy, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Bill Wallace, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Rosetta Waychus, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Mickey Williams, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Staff: Patrick Palmersheim, Executive Director, IDVA
Mari Mielke, IDVA – Recording Secretary
Missy Miller, IDVA, Trust Fund Administrator
Jill Joseph, IDVA, Outreach Coordinator
Bob Betz, IDVA, Clerk Specialist

David Worley, Commandant, IVH
Lisa Purvis, Legislative Liaison, IVH

Guests: Jill Jennings, House Republican Caucus
Dave Davis, Director, VARO
Connie Leverich, VA Central Iowa Health Care
Amelia Colwell, SPPG
Jennifer Furler, SPPG
Larry Spencer, Dept. of Iowa MOPH
Greg Hapgood, Iowa National Guard

Zeke Furlong, House Democratic Staff
Barry Sharp, Iowa City, VAMC
Valerie Buckingham, Iowa City, VAMC
John Mikelson, Univ. of Iowa Veterans Center
Jerry Meek, Dept. of Iowa MOPH
Greg Schwab, Iowa National Guard
Kathy Barton, Iowa National Guard

NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE 'UNAPPROVED' UNTIL ACCEPTED BY THE COMMISSION AT THE NEXT MEETING.

APPROVED: Darlene McMartin
Darlene McMartin, Chairperson, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Date: 4-6-2011

Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Commission Chair, Darlene McMartin.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance and then a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

The recording Secretary took roll call and all Commissioners were present except Commissioner Williams. Commissioner Williams joined the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

Welcome/Introductions of Guests:

Chairperson McMartin welcomed everyone and asked guests to introduce themselves to the Commission. The meeting was rescheduled from 10:00 to 9:00; therefore guests began coming in after 9:00 a.m.

Approval of Commission Minutes:

A motion made by Commissioner Mulcahy to approve the minutes from Commission Conference calls dated October 6, November 3, and December 1, 2010 and the Commission meeting held on September 22, 2010, was seconded by Commissioners Waychus and Delamore. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

VA Regional Office Update – Dave Davis

Fiscal year 2010 was a banner year for the Iowa Regional Office. Out of all the regional offices nationwide, four regional offices were singled out as having met or exceeded all of our goals for veterans compensation claims (timeliness, accuracy, etc.) the Iowa regional office is one of those four. This year's first quarter, 2,066 claims were processed. Last year was closed out with 7,253 claims; continuing this pace, the regional office will out produce all of last year's claims. There are 4,050 claims pending that are up a little bit; this is about 1,000 claims higher than this time last year. He believes that the pending claims are higher because of the time it takes for the claims that are processed with the new presumptive condition of Agent Orange and PTSD, more outreach to veterans within the state, and veterans are more knowledgeable about their entitled benefits and they talk to each other. Also, there are more veterans this time around coming out of service than any other previous wars.

The average days pending for claims are 118 days. The 125 day timeframe is what's considered the normal timeframe. Anything over 125 days is considered backlog. Discussion continued on the claims process.

VA Medical Center-Des Moines Update – Connie Leverich

Updated the Commission on construction projects: Dental addition construction has been completed. The 3B project will begin within the next few months and once completed will provide private rooms for all patients. Additional patient parking has been added by expanding parking lot 10. Work continues on the remodeling of the main kitchen and new canteen kitchen areas.

The Carroll CBOC located in St. Anthony's Hospital is scheduled to open in late February 2011. Through September 2010 – 5,344 OEF/OIF veterans have enrolled in health care. Of those veterans 3,211 received health care. VACIHCS continues outreach efforts to educate returning soldiers on health care benefits.

Commissioner Mulcahy voiced concerns about the newly developed Main Entry being locked at 7:00 p.m. and no one can use it. All the parking is up by the front door but you can't use, so folks have to walk all the way around the building. He asked that this issue be reviewed and hopefully resolved.

VA Medical Center – Iowa City Update – Barry Sharp

Construction continues to be ongoing. Major headache is the parking situation. We received our design money, but construction money comes later. The designing process has changed and they are now looking into designing a parking garage, which the original design was slated to be done in 2011. The funding didn't become available, so they needed to resubmit the funding request, which now takes us to 2012. It is the number one priority for the Medical Center's construction process. Discussion continued on the construction process.

There are two CBOC's in process of opening, one in Decorah in northeast Iowa and one in Sterling, Illinois. We have 14 counties in Illinois that they service in addition to the 32 counties we serve in Iowa.

Mr. Sharp had the pleasure of attending a national homeless conference in Washington, D.C. He is the vision champion for the Homeless Center for VISN 23. At the homeless conference he recognized that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs attended both days of the conference, not just the keynote speaker on the first day. Along with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs they had the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the Secretary of the Department of Labor; all on the same sheet of music, all singing the same song, all getting behind ending homelessness. It was a nice breath of fresh air coming out of Washington.

There was lengthy discussion regarding veteran's reimbursement for travel to any of the CBOC's or hospitals which has changed recently. They will only be paid travel pay to the closest location that the VA provides those services. In other words, if you live in the Quad Cities and you want to go to the Iowa City Medical Center because it's your preference, you would only be paid for travel to the closest CBOC.

Updated the Commission about the Medical Center contracting for IT services; it's beyond a challenge. The Director has no authority over the IT staff, which includes computers, networks, etc. The same is true for the contract staff. Their priorities are not necessarily our priorities.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked Mr. Sharp if he could organize a quarterly meeting that could be scheduled using the ICN video teleconference that would include the medical centers, the VARO, county VSO's, IDVA, etc. He said he would look into it.

Commissioner Mulcahy also talked to Mr. Sharp about the Knoxville facility becoming a Veterans National Recovery Center (VNRC) that Mr. Bob Krause talked to the Commission about at the September 22, 2010 meeting. Mr. Krause is proposing using the Knoxville facility as a homeless center for veterans.

Veterans Home Update – Dave Worley

He visited with Governor-Elect Branstad a few weeks ago and was asked to stay on as the Commandant of the Iowa Veterans Home, which he is very pleased with this reappointment. Shawna Callaway has been hired as the new Director of Nursing. She had been a nursing supervisor for about eight years. Discussed construction of Phase One, which some of the construction has been moved back because of flooding and weather conditions from last winter and this last spring and summer. Substantial completion of the 60 bed Fox building is April 24, 2011. And substantial completion of the 120 bed Ulery building is August 23, 2011. Construction discussion continued.

Commissioner McMartin asked that at the next meeting in April that the Commissioners could have a tour after the meeting on April 6th. October 1, the VA stepped up its daily per diem from \$76 to \$94 for each veteran. The 70% service connected disability veterans (approximately 20) the VA pays for their daily cost of care and the veteran gets to keep their service connected disability payments. This wasn't the case a few years back.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked about the inspection process of the buildings at IVH. Is it before or after residents have moved in? Each building needs to be 50% or 20 residents in the buildings; whichever is least. Discussion continued.

Camp Dodge Office Update – Patrick Palmersheim

Before Mr. Palmersheim did his update, Commissioner McMartin asked Mr. Palmersheim to come to the front of the auditorium. Assistant Adjutant General Schwab of the Iowa Air National Guard Schwab representing Adjutant General Orr, who couldn't be present today, first to thank all of people in attendance for all we do for Iowa's veterans and to honor and award Mr. Palmersheim with a medallion for all his years of service as the out-going Executive Director of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and his dedication to honoring Iowa's veterans. Mr. Palmersheim referenced a time last year that he and General Orr flew by helicopter to Charles City and were dropped off at this little tiny airport with one light on and no one there to pick them up out in the middle of nowhere.

Commissioner McMartin also presented Mr. Palmersheim with a bronze eagle (very heavy) on behalf of the Commission for all his years of service to Iowa's veterans. Commissioner Jacobus also read a list of his accomplishments over the years, which includes and not limited to:

- The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs became a state department under his tenure
- The start to finish of establishing, building and running the first and only Iowa Veterans Cemetery
- The department was established as an accredited service organization
- The Injured Veteran Grant program was established
- The County Grant/Allocation was established
- The Veterans Trust Fund program was established

- The Lottery became involved with games that benefited the Veterans Trust Fund
- The on-line nursing home reporting system was established
- The department was involved with many of the Honor Flights that took place the last several years with Hy-Vee and Casey's stores
- Replacement of the department's records retrieval system
- The Homeless Veterans Task Force
- Establishment and renewal of partnerships and outreach opportunities with a variety of organizations
- Increases in state benefits for veterans through these partnerships
- The established partnership with the State Public Policy Group (SPPG)
- A great resource at Camp Dodge for the Iowa National Guard

IDVA Update

- The Spring School is scheduled for April 12-14 at the Holiday Inn on Merle Hay in Des Moines.
- Mr. Palmersheim met with Jodi Tymeson the incoming Executive Director, to go over the programs and projects at IDVA.
- The Quick Books have been ordered for the counties. The postcards (50,000) have also been ordered. Could be distributed to the counties at the Spring School.
- The budget at IDVA with regards to the Commission's expenses have already surpassed all of last year's expenses. The new director may have to ask the Commission to utilize the Trust Fund for administrative costs to help cover the Commissioner's expenses for travel, attending meetings, etc.

Trust Fund Update - Missy Miller

Every year the Commission needs to do a Trust Fund report that is distributed to the General Assembly by January 15th. After discussion of the final report Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to approve the report and seconded by Commissioner McAllister. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

The Commission had discussion about IDVA's lack of information technology (IT) getting done in a timely manner (case in point the website) and possibly use funds from the License Plate fund to about the Commission getting a website that can be updated regularly. Chairperson McMartin will discuss this further with the incoming Executive Director, Jodi Tymeson. Discussion continued on IT issues.

IACCVA Update - Elizabeth Ledvina

There are approximately 10 counties that have changed personnel and will need to be accredited this year. It would be useful if IDVA could have an "Education/School" meeting sometime in February to go over the preparations for the Spring School of Instruction.

Old Business

Discussion of the PSAs (public service announcements) and the state contract for the Quick Book Series went out on December 23, 2010. Commissioner Waychus talked about the process that should take place after the holidays to get the books published.

New Business

Veterans Legislative Day at the Capitol report: Lisa Purvis

Veterans Day at the Capitol is scheduled for January 19, which will begin with a Legislative breakfast from 7:00 – 9:00 a.m. in Room 19. A flyer describing the events for the day and the 2011 Veterans Priorities was distributed to all in attendance. She wanted to make clear of the fact that several veterans' service organizations (VSO) were involved with not only the planning of the legislative day but also the Veterans Priorities listed on the flyer. These priorities are on behalf of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs not one specific veterans service organization or one specific agency.

State Public Policy Group (SPPG) Update – Jennifer Furler

Jennifer updated the Commission on the implementation and recommendations relating to mental health from the required legislative Benefits Study that SPPG did on behalf of the Commission. They are specifically working now on seeking opportunities to implement some of the recommendations.

One of the recommendations from the study is to provide mental health first aid training to county VSOs and other service organizations and stakeholders, including family readiness groups; progress is going good. Have been working with the Iowa Department of Human Services to review some of their programs and they have agreed to have a little veterans supplement that would be in addition to their existing training; an initial draft of that has been developed and running it by some mental health experts.

Also been working with two certified trainers from the National Guard on mental health first aid and they are going to be offering mental health first aid training to the family readiness groups. The Guard has also agreed to partner with the Commission to be the trainers in delivering mental health first aid training to the county service officers. The training will consist of 12 hours which will probably be divided into 6 hours of training over a two day period.

Have been in contact with the Iowa Department of Transportation about their interest in collecting information strictly on whether or not an individual has served in the military and then sharing that information with IDVA and the counties so that outreach can be conducted with those veterans. Postcards have been developed to get the word out to the state's veterans that otherwise don't know about benefits they could be eligible to receive. The cards ask "Have you served?" and list information for the veteran to contact.

Jennifer also indicated that the DOT office supervisors come together for regular meetings and the postcards will be distributed at that meeting and there will be an explanation of what to do with them, what the purpose is, etc. The DOT mentioned that they would like 20,000 of the cards and the rest will be determined of how the remaining 30,000 will be distributed. Discussion continued.

Veterans Trust Fund Assistance that is under suspension because of lack of funding:

The following areas of suspension have been temporarily suspended since April 2009 due to lack of funding are: job training or college tuition assistance; ambulance and emergency room services; durable equipment; counseling services; prescription drug assistance; expenses related to establishing a minor child is a dependent of a deceased veteran (DNA testing); benefit for the child of a disabled or deceased veteran; travel assistance; veteran service organization grants; and the honor guard reimbursements.

The areas that have major impact to applicants that are currently not funded are: emergency room and ambulance services and expenses related to establishing a minor child is a dependent of a deceased veteran.

After discussion, Commissioner Waychus made a motion to open up section 14.4(7) ambulance and emergency room services for veterans who are trauma patients and seconded by Commissioner Mulcahy. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

After discussion, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to open up section 14.4(9) expenses related to establishing a minor child is a dependent of a deceased veteran and seconded by Commissioner Williams. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Since there are more funds coming in on a more regular basis, the Commission is able to open up some of these areas again. The trust fund is averaging over \$20,000 per month in spendable funds and averaging \$1,200 - \$1,800 of those funds going out.

Commissioner Mulcahy discussed that the Iowa Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Iowa City Medical Center to do claims for Comp. and Pension exams for veterans in the state's correctional facilities. This means that veteran's service officers of the VVA as outside sponsors can go and do claims. He wanted to let Barry Sharp, Director of the Iowa City Medical Center for his part in helping get this done.

Commissioner Mulcahy also wanted to pass along to Commissioner Dirks Haugsted that he appreciated that the VFW Commander apologized for the outburst at the last Vets Council meeting in December.

Commissioner Jacobus made mention that the "Events" listing that he puts out gets very little feedback from the veterans affairs county offices, veteran's organizations, veteran's community, etc. to have miscellaneous information of upcoming events, district meetings, dates of quarterly meetings of the service organizations. He would like to see more information coming in to him so that it is as current and informative as possible. He would also like to talk with the incoming Executive Director, Jodi Tymeson about this issue once she's on board.

Three Commission seats will be up as of April 30 consisting of the VVA (Steve Mulcahy), MOPH (Don Delamore) and the at Large seat (Rosetta Waychus). Names are submitted to the Governor's office for new appointments effective May 1st.

Commission Chair, Darlene McMartin mentioned that Commissioner Bill Wallace will work with IDVA's Executive Director, Jodi Tymeson as the point of contact liaison of the Commission for the Iowa Veterans Cemetery.

Commissioner Jacobus volunteered to be the Commission's point of contact liaison for the veteran's service organizations.

Public Comment

John Derner with the American Legion asked both medical center representatives about all the talk in the news of Iowa going to an electronic health record to multiple providers; since the VA has always been a leader in the electronic record keeping, will the medical centers be sharing their expertise and will VA records be a part of that system?

The Central Iowa VA Medical Center is actually working on that headed by Dr. Baulls (sp.), Chief of Staff, in the Des Moines area regarding a Community Electronic Records. Couldn't say how much progress has taken place or if they will eventually be able to hook into the system.

Iowa City Medical Center commented that there was a national pilot project done at the San Diego Medical Center.

Determine next Commission meeting

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for April 6th at the Iowa Veterans Home, Ford Conference room, beginning at 10:00 a.m. with a possible tour of the construction and new buildings after the meeting.

Trust Fund Applications

After discussion of application #00350 which is a pending application because no response has been received from the veteran, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to deny and seconded by Commissioner Waychus. Motion carried; denied unanimously.

After discussion of application #00403 requesting funds for dental work, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to approve and Commissioner Waychus seconded the motion. Roll call taken, Commissioner Delamore, yes; Commissioner McAllister, yes; Commissioner McMartin, yes; Commissioner Dirks Haugsted, no; Commissioner Jacobus, yes; Commissioner Williams, no; Commissioner Wallace, yes. Motion carried.

After discussion of application #00408, which the veteran has not provided needed information, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to deny and seconded by Commissioner Waychus. Motion carried; denied unanimously.

After discussion of application #00421 requesting \$2,500 for dental care, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner McMartin. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

After discussion of application #00423 requesting \$2,500 for five months of unemployment benefits, Commissioner Waychus made a motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner Mulcahy. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

After discussion of application #00429 requesting funds for housing repairs, Commissioner McMartin made a motion to defer and seconded by Commissioner Delamore. Motion carried; deferred unanimously.

After discussion of application #00433 requesting \$1,354 for dental expenses, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner Waychus. Motion carried; approved unanimously. Applicant also requested unemployment funds. Commissioner Waychus made a motion to deny and seconded by Commissioner Mulcahy. Motion carried; denied unanimously. Also requested funds for housing repairs, which Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to defer and seconded by Commissioner Waychus. Motion carried; deferred unanimously.

After discussion of application #00434 requesting unemployment, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to deny and seconded by Commissioner Waychus. Motion carried; denied unanimously.

After discussion of application #00435 requesting funds for dental work, Commissioner Williams made a motion to deny and seconded by Commissioner Mulcahy. Motion carried; denied unanimously.

After discussion of application #00437 requesting funds for housing repairs, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to defer and seconded by Commissioner McMartin. Motion carried; denied unanimously.

After discussion of application #00438 requesting \$2,363 for dental expenses, Commissioner Mulcahy made a motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner McMartin. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Jacobus wanted to make clear that the discussion of unsuspended assistance from the Trust Fund that was approved today is repeated as follows:

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mari Mielke

Mari Mielke
Recording Secretary

Cc:

Jeffrey Boeyink, Chief of Staff, Governor's Office
Ted Stopulos, IDVA Policy Advisor, Governor's Office
Sandra Hurtado-Peters, Department of Management
Barbara Galloway, Assistant Attorney, Attorney General's Office
Sue Lerdal, Legislative Fiscal Bureau
Jenny Lawrence, Auditor's Office
Jessica Holmes, Department of Administrative Services
Steven Ainger, Department of Administrative Services
David Worley, Commandant, IVH
Nancy Morford, Administrative Assistant, IVH
Lisa Purvis, Legislative Liaison, IVH
Senator Daryl Beall, Senate VA Committee, Chair
Senator James Seymour, Senate VA Committee, RM
Representative Royd Chambers, House VA Committee, Chair
Representative Jerry Kearns, House VA Committee, RM

John Derner, Adjutant, American Legion
Ron Healy, Iowa UAW Veterans Committee
Jerry Meek, Commander, MOPH
Jon Schneider, President, PVA
Reginald Richardson, Pres., Reserve Officers Assn.
Larry Jatho, Adjutant, DAV
David Hunter, Commander, Marine Corp. League
Elizabeth Ledvina, President, IACCVVA
Barry Sharp, Director, VAMC, Iowa City
Don Cooper, VAMC, Des Moines
David Davis, Director, VA Regional Office
Julie Simon, Senate Democratic Caucus Staff
Zeke Furlong, House Democratic Research Staff
Jill Jennings, House Republican Caucus Staff